Volume 11 No. 10

November 2003

# The New Zealand BeeKeeper

Permit Post
Wellington, N.Z.
Permit No. 154506

*Buttercup*

*Apricot*

*Dandelion*

*Kaiwhiria*

*Lavender*

*Lemonwood*

*Loganberry*

*Nashi pear*

*Succulent*

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## • PMS - AFB INFORMATION



ISSN 0110-63325
The Official Journal of The National Beekeepers Association of New Zealand Inc.

Published by Crown Kerr Printing
P.O. Box 5002
Dunedin, New Zealand

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NZ Beekeeper Printed & Published by:
Crown Kerr Printing Ltd
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**Advertising:** Allan Middlemiss: Telephone: 03-477 8109
Fax: 03-479 0753
Email: ckp@xtra.co.nz

# President's Report

Many of you will have received this magazine, and are wondering why you have received it. Read on and all will be revealed!

**American Foulbrood Pest Management Strategy**
The main reason for this happening is to inform you all of progress with the American Foulbrood Pest Management Strategy. The National Beekeepers' Association as the Management Agency for this strategy, anticipates that the Invoices for funding the strategy will be sent to all Beekeepers, around the end of November 2003.

We are utilising this issue to educate everyone on how the strategy is being funded, and what your obligations are as beekeepers contributing to this strategy. Please see later articles in this issue.

**Communication to everyone**
We hope that you enjoy this journal which is produced by the National Beekeepers Association eleven times a year and would encourage you to take out a subscription to our association so that you can continue to receive a copy. We utilise this journal to keep all our members informed of what is being dealt with by the Executive of the Association. Where possible we use email and faxes to communicate with members and Branches when issues require responses at shorter notice.

We have noted that some of the email addresses we have must be wrong, or you have changed your address, as several emails have returned to us. If you read this, and realise that you have not been receiving correspondence from us, then kindly inform us of your correct address, so that we can update it.

**Meeting with Minister Sutton – re Research Funding**
On the 23rd of October, we met with Minister Sutton, over funding for Bee Research and in particular funding to cover the ongoing Varroa Research. The minister was not able to come up with funds, suggesting that we explore the option of another sustainable farming fund project, ie: similar to "Expanding Options" with industry funds commitment, and a government contribution.

We have been communicating with several MP's and other affected parties such as the Kiwifruit industry and the Avocado growers. It is interesting to note that in the future the Avocado growers anticipate needing 40,000 beehives to carry out their pollination. It is also interesting to note that the hives used for Kiwifruit are not the type of hives needed for Avocado pollination. We will be communicating to the Minister that not only will there need to be the 70-80 thousand hives required for Kiwifruit pollination but an additional 40,000 for Avocado's. When you tally that up and work out how many hives we have in total in New Zealand 280-290 thousand, with 135 thousand of these in the South Island, we are going to be struggling to ensure sufficient hives into pollination. Also once resistance to the treatment chemicals occurs the current 10-20% losses are likely to climb to 30% or more. As many will realise, the Organic beekeeper is also destined to become an extinct species, as the organic treatments currently being used are not giving a high enough Varroa kill rate with each application – hence large numbers of organic hives are being lost. Some reports I have received are in the order of 50% to 70% losses. This loss rate is impossible to reverse as everyone knows it is difficult to be able to split every active hive to make up losses.

**VARROA PEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**
This strategy has just come out to the Executive, and submissions were due by the 22nd of October.

It has only been distributed to Industry groups for an industry response. We are disappointed that this has occurred and that the Varroa Planning group did not distribute it more widely. It makes it extremely difficult for the Executive to make a response from our member's point of view.

The South Island Executive members are seeking input from beekeepers in the South Island, and I have notified all on email that this submission has been called for. We have also notified and sent a copy to the Branch President's and Secretary's.

The Executive has also put in a submission on this proposal from the perspective of the Management Agency for the American Foulbrood PMS. The reason for this is that the Varroa PMS is envisaging using the data base that we have to invoice South Island beekeepers, and that the Invoices for the Varroa PMS would be sent out at the same time as the American Foulbrood PMS.

We are concerned that if this is carried out that the Varroa PMS may impact upon our AFB PMS, if beekeepers in the South Island are reluctant to pay for the Varroa PMS, they may be reluctant to register all their sites, and so reduce the funding base, and compliance further.

**UP AND COMING ISSUES**
**Honey House-Risk Management Programmes (RMP)**
We have recently been in contact with Glen Neal, with regards to the requirements to have an RMP in place by 2006. He has touched base with us to see if we can get a group together that will progress this – this will include people from the National Beekeeper's Association, as well as the Federated Farmers BIG group.

Once Glen has identified who will be responsible for progressing this from the New Zealand Food Safety Authority

**Deadline for Publication**

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| February Edition: | 20 January 2004 |
| March Edition: | 15 February 2004 |

All articles/letters/photos to be with the Secretary Publications Committee via fax, e-mail, or post:

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The front cover of the November Edition of the New Zealand Beekeeper has been proudly sponsored by Comvita New Zealand.

(NZFSA), we will be progressing this – we hope to the point where we will get a template out to members for their use to meet customer requirements. NZFSA has just notified us that some changes are proposed to the RMP due to changes in legislation, errors, omissions and to make RMP's easier!!

The Executive have also recently been notified by NZFSA of proposed changes to some of the legislation that may affect us. One lot of changes affects some of the wording in the Harvest Declaration that many beekeepers will now have to fill out when on-selling product. Part of this declaration relates to Tutu plant areas and the likelihood of gathering honey dew from this plant that is toxic. Those of you in regions with tutu plants and high numbers of Passion vine hoppers – beware of the dangers of harvesting honey in these areas, and observe and document the presence or absence of passion vine hoppers on tutu plants during the honey flow.

**GENETIC MODIFICATION ISSUES**

1. The Environmental Risk Management Agency (ERMA) have held a series of meetings around the country over issues with relation to Managing Genetic Modification. ERMA has been given the responsibility of reviewing applications to release organisms into the environment – this includes GM material. It is proposed that with the category of Conditional Release, ERMA may then place certain restrictions on those who wish to grow GM organisms. If this works, and ERMA have the personnel to review all applications, and gather all relevant information, then this should give some hope of proceeding with caution – BUT will they have sufficient resources to meet the demand?

   The meeting in Hamilton was on the 4th and 5th of November, and notification was in Octobers Beekeeping Magazine enabling as many beekeepers as possible to attend and ask further questions.

2. I have had a recent telephone conversation with Irene Parminter of MAF here in Hamilton, over a proposed discussion document with regards to setting up a GIS based register.

The paper is likely to cover:

- Background · Beekeepers concerns regarding GM (based on previous consultation) · ERMA processes and opportunities for the beekeeping sector to participate. Types of decision (not approved, contained, conditionally released or released)
- Why the Government has asked MAF to investigate a register :- purpose of the register
- Do they want a register of GM crops? Would they use it to help with hive siting decisions?
- Who should own and administer the database? Private firm, independent body, government agency, AgriQuality?
- Should they be automatically alerted when a crop is conditionally released near their apiary site? How?
- What information should be included on the register - name of crop? Expected flowering date? Anything else? If a crop is male sterile should it be on the register? If it is not expected to flower should it be on the register?
- How could the confidentiality of the information be protected to minimise the risk of sabotage of GM crops? · Who should pay for maintaining the register?

**- Jane Lorimer**

# *SUBMISSION -*
# *Draft Varroa Pest Management Strategy*

**STATE OF BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY**

With the introduction of varroa in 2000 the topic of effects and control have dominated the discussions at various beekeeper field days and meetings. Much of the 'evidence' produced is based on emotion and fear. This submission is to add some realism and practical thinking to the proposal.

Beekeeping in the South Island consists of different climatic regions and different honey and beehive products and services producing revenue to the beekeepers. The Kim van Vuuren report was a limited study into the financial statements of a cross section of South Island beekeepers. From this report it can be seen that there is a vast difference in income/profit in the various regions of NZ this would indicate primarily a difference in products and services (paid pollination).

Since 2000 there has been a noticeable re distribution of South Island beehives to regions which produce better opportunity for beehives/beekeepers. It is also evident that areas are now becoming marginal in profitability for beekeepers because of changes in Agricultural practices. Beehives have moved from Otago and Canterbury to Marlborough and other destinations in North Island.

The Beekeeping industry has also undergone recent political unrest. The commodity levy which provided funding for the NBA to run a collective industry association, AFB Pest Management Strategy, and "Industry Good" projects was rejected in a vote by beekeepers. The NBA is now a voluntary organisation and the Fed Farmers have also set up a beekeeping group. The beekeeper unity which is an important consideration for an eradication attempt is sadly lacking at present.

There are also groups of hobby beekeepers who generally are not industry motivated. There is also a significant number of beekeepers who chose not to belong to any organisation for their own personal reasons. Some beekeepers have membership spanning 2 or more organisations.

There has been an increased awareness of profitability in beekeeping as a result of varroa incursion and also the 2001-2 honey crops nationally being extremely low, the national average 15kg/hive placed many marginal beekeepers into a realisation that a greater value needs to be placed on all aspects of beekeeping in order to sustain the business. South Island beekeepers are already moving towards smarter beekeeping in order that they become more profitable in anticipation of further disruption to their business by varroa.

There are many beehives in South Island which could be classed as poorly managed - these belong to beekeepers who have lost interest or do not have the ability to manage their hives adequately, in some cases beehives exist rather than being managed and maintained to produce profits.

**Suitability for a Pest Management Strategy**
It is a concern that as varroa is an exotic or unwanted organism to the South Island the provisions of the Biosecurity Act, (part V) do not appear to 'fit' very well. Some of the prerequisites for a PMS proposal are not able to be met by this proposal.

The purpose of the strategy is to provide for effective management or eradication of varroa - there is a movement control operating on goodwill with no promises of eradication or eradication procedures in the event varroa is found. This is hardly effective.

Points I wish to raise about the proposal will follow the order of the proposal.

## ADVERSE EFFECTS OF VARROA

Whilst I agree on many of the points listed as adverse effects of Varroa the quoted survey of South Island beekeepers which found only 40% commercial beekeepers would be able to continue if varroa was to come to South Island is a non qualified gut feeling by beekeepers. This should be interpreted as an indication of their profitability and willingness to live with varroa. The feral hives referred to as pollinators have never been surveyed - there are areas in which it is assumed large populations of ferals exist however in areas such as the Canterbury plains there are very few ferals as this area is probably unsuitable for sustained feral populations. Most fruit and crop areas in South Island are devoid of suitable habitats for substantial numbers of feral hives. Spray applications in the crops have the effect of making these areas environmentally unfriendly to feral bees and even managed colonies - this is probably the reason that there is a pollination service offered by beekeepers as the keeping of bees in orchards on a permanent basis is not a profitable situation because of meagre crops and potential spray damage.

The proposal has hardly touched on the benefits of varroa.

The main benefit of varroa is that it is non-selective in the beehives it destroys. It will destroy most feral hives as well it will destroy hives which are poorly managed to the extent that it will affect those beekeepers who are less committed to the industry and their bees. A reduction in the number of beekeepers and beehives may also lead to a situation whereby the beekeepers remaining will be better rewarded for their efforts both in the supply/price of their product and an acceptance by farmers to pay for the pollination efforts of the beekeeper.

I also believe that the introduction of varroa would ultimately be an advantage in reducing the AFB incidence in NZ. The beekeepers with AFB would be severely affected to the extent that these businesses would cease to exist - these hives would be generally unsaleable and only suitable for rendering the wax.

## THE MANAGEMENT AGENCY

It is my view that the Management Agency needs to be separate to any beekeeper group but needs to have representation from all funders as well as representatives from beekeeping industry groups including hobby beekeepers.

## PERIOD OF STRATEGY

It is my view that the strategy would need a further clause to the extent that it is terminated if eradication is not attempted or attempted and failed. The reason for this is that it would be a further burden for beekeepers affected with varroa to be paying for Varroa treatment and a strategy to prevent varroa incursions to South Island.

## OBJECTIVES OF PROPOSED PMS

The Govt in its setting up the VPG set the criteria for the long term management of varroa the objective for the South Island was to ensure that the South Island remains free of varroa for as long as practicable. By including an eradication capability into this strategy the VPG have significantly altered the Govt directive. To be acceptable, to the point of funding, the objectives need to include an eradication plan which is acceptable to beekeepers also an indication of South Island movement control lines which would be set up as an incursion response. It is envisaged that many of the reasons for not proceeding with an eradication attempt when Varroa was first detected in the North Island should be addressed before the strategy is in place in order that beekeepers make an informed choice to enter into a strategy which is able to fulfil its objectives. Even to embark on a varroa incursion response without eradication will necessitate movement controls is this acceptable to beekeepers?

My estimation for beekeeper support for an eradication attempt is that there are beekeepers who have accepted the situation that varroa will reach the South Island and have started to prepare their own businesses to cope with varroa - it is my estimation that beekeeper compliance cannot be guaranteed and would severely compromise an eradication attempt. This was one of the main reasons for not attempting eradication in the North Island. A similar situation would probably occur in the South Island. Further discussion/consultation with beekeepers is needed to ascertain the support for an eradication process without support eradication will fail or will not be attempted this begs the question is it worth spending $760,000 pa for essentially a movement control which costs very little. Much of the support for a PMS as proposed is based on emotion. Some beekeepers support the PMS as proposed because there have not been other options put, a case of half a cake is better than no cake it all.

## ALTERNATIVE MEASURES

The VPG has identified 4 measures:

**1. National eradication**
This is a turning back the clock and should not have even taken the space on paper to be considered again.

**2. Regional PMS**
My only comment is that this proposal is a regional PMS - the South Island region. All efforts appear to be placed on South Island in terms of funding/surveillance/response.

**3. Management under p.VI Biosecurity Act Powers**
This option has not been progressed far enough. It is my belief that the movement controls under S131 of the Biosecurity Act are sufficient to maintain the South Island freedom of varroa. Funding for the movement control could be attained by a fixed cost for permitting risk goods. Essentially this would involve the measures to prevent spread to South Island and would cost approx $125,000 pa including a $90,000 education & awareness program. It is my view that the Govt

could provide for the long term these measures until varroa is confirmed in South Island - this would be provided for under provisions of the Biosecurity vote. This is consistent with the Govt decision taken in 2000 to control varroa - to abandon the control mid stream is a neglect by Govt to continue control measures. It has not been ascertained why the current movement controls, while they may be effective, have to be removed and what date does government intend to remove movement controls and the reasons why the beekeeping industry is not in a position to assume this form of control under Sec.131 Biosecurity Act.

**4. No regulatory measure**
This would involve lifting all existing movement control lines this is not the actions of a responsible Govt.

In addition to these measures there are options which have not been considered.

That a PMS only concentrates on movement control with no surveillance. This would be more cost effective $35,000 pa. There would be no need for surveillance and also no need for an expensive management agency.

The effectiveness of this proposal may be just as effective as the proposed NPMS ie why pay $760,000 for a $35,000 (movement control) strategy.

Other options are also being implemented.

Although not in the same category as the eradication NPMS the Govt through the MAF Sustainable Farming Fund as well as NBA initiatives and funding through the Honey Trust have prepared an education program to enhance beekeeping business for the survival with varroa.

After having closed borders for the importation of genetic bee material for at least 50 years protocols are being prepared for the importation of varroa tolerant/resistant bees.

**PROPOSED RULES & OFFENCES**
I do not propose to comment on the proposed rules & offences as this is likely to require more consultation with the industry.

**COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS**
The cost benefit analysis should be divided more appropriately amongst the funders of the proposed strategy. A separate CBA should be done for both beekeepers and regional councils (the wider community).

The CBA which was produced in 2000 was an aid to assist Govt in its deliberations over eradication in North Island; it is probably not suitable for the funders of the proposed strategy. As there are 2 funding groups within this proposal a separate CBA should have been produced for each group.

From a beekeeping point of view a simple statement that as varroa is not present in the South Island there is no cost to South Island beekeepers for varroa control. To pay even $2 per hive for a strategy means that the strategy is in effect costing more than the control!

Beekeepers are the "commercial custodians" of bees. Profitability is the practical application of a CBA. Profitability is a balancing act between costs and production. Those who successfully manage this balance will survive and should not base their financial well being on the proposed strategy which at the end of the day may not achieve any benefit apart from unquantifiable movement control measures.

Beekeepers in the South Island own approx 135,000 hives at an average value of $100 per colony (saleable beehives with good disease history and sound equipment have been sold at $140 while there are many beehives in South Island which could be classed as unsaleable because of the incidence of disease in operation and generally unsound equipment).

The effect a varroa incursion would have on the South Island beehives is $13.5m being a worst case total loss of bee colonies situation, however in the foreseeable future varroa is able to be managed by those engaged in profitable beekeeping. Thus the effect of an incursion needs a reassessment. In overseas experience beehives have been reduced in number as well beekeepers have chosen to exit the industry. This trend can also be accepted in the South Island, beekeeping will remain a chosen occupation and perhaps should not be subsidised by the wider community or provide a subsidy to the wider community.

The $13.5m could be reduced to approx $7m if we assume loss of half the South Island hives The strategy will spend $7m over 10 years - the value of the lost beehives!

The cost of an annual surveillance $440,000 can only be realised if an action is taken as a result of this surveillance. To hoist a flag at a varroa incursion site is hardly a benefit worth $440,000 pa.

A separate CBA should be developed for the Regional Councils. This would be able to include the actual effects of varroa in the North Island and the costs and/or the effects on the ratepayers in the affected areas. This would need to take into account marginal pollination from hives producing bush type honey - a large proportion of South Island hives.

**FUNDING A VARROA NPMS**
As the proposal is for a National PMS it is possible to identify all beekeepers in the North Island as exacerbators not just the one who practice sub-standard treatment or no treatment. Likewise South Island beekeepers cannot be exacerbators until they have varroa. It would not be able to quantify where a varroa incursion into the South Island would come from but it is to be assumed it would come from the closest region with varroa – the North Island. As the National PMS covers the whole NZ it is not unreasonable to include the North Island beekeepers as funders to the PMS (as exacerbators). The funding portion received could be used for research and development.

There is no compulsion to treat hives suffering from varroa. This could be a significant part of a strategy with the aim to effectively manage varroa.

The inference that South Island beekeepers constitute the bulk of the exacerbators is also inaccurate - there is no varroa in the South Island for South Island beekeepers to spread!

**EFFECTS ON OTHER STRATEGIES**

The only comments I would make on the effects on AFB PMS is that the proposed Varroa PMS is likely to be a major cost to South Island beekeepers. I believe there is considerable non-compliance with the AFB PMS – when varroa was identified in Auckland there were approx 12,000 beehives which were immediately registered, The main reason I suggest for non-compliance is that there is an attitude amongst beekeepers "the more you declare the more you owe" this leads to beehives not being registered. With a substantial increase in levies with 2 strategies there would be risk of further shrinkage in registered hives.

**THE CONSULTATION & PROCESS**

The initial round of consultation with industries has in my opinion been less than adequate from the meeting that I attended it was evident that the beekeepers wanted movement control however there was a mixed "vote" at the meeting when an indication of support was called for. The proposed NPMS or rather a movement control was the only option voted on. There were no alternatives offered or promoted.

After the consultation there appears to be no consensus amongst beekeepers - perhaps a board of inquiry would be necessary to assess beekeeper acceptance by a simple vote. Many beekeepers have the opinion that they will receive a vote on the proposed strategy as of right.

**- Roger Bray**

# Why Report Disease?

It is a requirement of the AFB PMS for beekeepers to notify disease within 7 days of discovery.

Disease Control in any livestock is based on a premise of keeping healthy stock healthy and isolating and treating diseases appropriately. With AFB the only sure treatment is destruction by fire of bees and equipment.

Locating AFB in most cases in NZ is like looking for a needle in a haystack (until there are more needles than hay!) With modern day beekeeping time spent repeatedly checking clean hives for AFB invades on the task of beekeeping for profit. Within most beekeeping operations strategies should be operating which are designed to locate disease and minimise spread. An extremely important tool to locating disease is to use historical information of disease occurrence to identify risk areas, which would demand a greater effort of identification and isolation.

The PMS has been designed to assist beekeepers to eradicating AFB in NZ. The requirement to notify disease within 7 days is to identify areas promptly which have disease and to identify areas, which have an increasing disease occurrence. The use of timely information will allow a response to any outbreaks. As AFB has the ability to affect neighbouring beekeepers there needs to be a mechanism to alert beekeepers to be on their guard in locations where AFB is found.

An enhancement of the reporting process would be for the Management Agency/AgriQuality to advise neighbouring beekeepers of disease in a specific area (say 2.5k radius). In some cases the beekeeper notifying disease first may have been infected by disease from a beekeeper who is unaware he has, and may be spreading, disease.

The proper reporting of AFB is seen as a duty of all beekeepers and helps our industry to combat AFB. It also provides a "good neighbour" situation for the benefit of all beekeepers.

# AFB Canterbury Region

Tony Roper (AgriQuality) conducted a training session for AgriQuality staff recently.

As part of a field exercise beehives were inspected for AFB & Exotics.

Tony has indicated issues associated with the field exercise

a) It would appear that not all beehives are registered and there are several keepers of bees who are unaware of their obligations.

b) There was a number of AFB hives found in this area which would indicate statistically that there may be a larger AFB problem in Canterbury which has not been identified.

There are several issues which should be considered by the Canterbury beekeepers (and indeed perhaps in other areas as well).

The AFB PMS is the legal framework for the control with the aims of eradicating AFB. The PMS was not designed to assume ownership of AFB disease. The responsibility lies with individual beekeepers within their own hives. An education, training program and reporting facilities has been set up. An auditing program has operated – to audit the beekeepers, not to find disease for the beekeepers!

The NBA (in is role as Management Agency PMS) is progressing the Biosecurity Order for funding of the PMS. At present work on PMS either by NBA or AgriQuality is on a voluntary basis ie PMS is working on Goodwill.

**Where to for Canterbury?**
We have 2 voluntary organisations and other hobby groups. Should the responsibility for AFB be placed on these organisations?

How does this industry locate the problem areas within the PMS for the Canterbury Region?

ie. identifying unregistered beekeepers or beehives?

How do we set up a response team to assist in the audit process?

Should we set up a team?

***- Roger Bray***

# *From the colonies*

## Otago

Well as I mentioned in my last report, the odd winter blasts were still to come, and indeed they did. September was a cold month and as a result spring is a little on the late side. On the Otago coast willows are in full bloom now (October 16th) a good two weeks later than usual. Given we now have more settled weather, compared to gales every other day two weeks ago, then that is rather a handy thing. Feeding hives can cease for a while in some areas. That willow flush is a great thing when it happens but the honey has a habit of vanishing within a couple of weeks as hives put on brood.

The cold winds, snow, and frequent frosts over the last few weeks have meant trying times for orchardists in Central. One I spoke to the other day estimated that less than 20% fruit set on his apricots, the bees only flying for a few hours on a few days. For the first time in his experience the trees were covered in snow during blossom and he didn't really know whether to turn the sprinklers on or not! Cherries are now in full bloom and will be getting the full treatment from bees this week.

Otago hives continue to be packed up and sold to the North Island, with around a thousand on their way this month. I don't believe this is a case of beekeepers abandoning ship in anticipation of Varroa's arrival, but rather an opportunity for those nearing retirement to realise a good return on stock as they reduce hive numbers. Other beekeepers in the south are developing a regular trade of hives to the north as part of their ongoing business. As one said, "we can't always produce honey, but we can always produce bees."

Hopefully this year we will do both.

**- Peter Sales**

## Canterbury Branch

Spring may have finally started this last week after 3 weeks of cold, overcast, conditions. In this neck of the woods the willow flow is usually brought to an abrupt halt with the Nor-west winds associated with equinox however the wet conditions this year were just as effective. I am taking solace in what a very experienced beekeeper once told me "'In forty years he had only once ever experienced a successful willow flow and a good clover crop in the same season. I would be interested in your opinions on this!

On doing my rounds one is forever noticing the changes in ones community and over the last couple of years it has been the proliferation of Irrigation. While there is a definite upside for clover production, ie. crop stability, There is in my opinion a more sinister downside. Preceding the irrigators is "The 30 tonne digger" It is amazing what these machines can achieve in a short amount of time but from a Beekeepers point of view it is total destruction. Gone are the old gum plantations that have been on most farms for the last 100 years and those well sheltered but sunlit sites. Gone are the major spring pollen sources that used to grow in these forgotten corners. It takes a fair amount of effort to get bees up to strength on pinus radiata and ryegrass!

Question, Does all progress need to come at some cost?

**- Brian Lancaster**

## Hawkes Bay

Well the sun is shining at last and while the bees are not flat out, they are at least feeding themselves.

We have been looking at venues for the conference in 2004, and it is a hard job. Most won't hold enough people or are in the wrong place, still we have found a place, though it's a bit dearer than we would have liked, but it is very nice. It doesn't have accommodation but there are lots of hotels, motels, and backpackers within easy walking distance. Planning is in the early stages but the conference dinner will have an art deco theme, there are several costume hire shops in Hawkes Bay but why not make your own. We have several ideas for guest speakers, but if anyone has any ideas please let me know.

You can contact me...

**J Berry**
**46 Arataki Rd**
**Havelock North**
**Phone: 06 877 6205**
**Fax: 06 877 6206**
**Email: kberry@ihug.co.nz**

**- John Berry**

## Southland

Spring has finally sprung after the shock of widespread snow early in October. Our bees and beekeepers are thrilled that for once the willow flowering was not accompanied by the usual high winds so in some areas hives are very strong.

The consensus among southern beekeepers is that the proposed varroa PMS is misdirected. We want movement controls kept at Cook Strait as a partial barrier but, as there is no confidence that the Government would be prepared to fund an attempted eradication, believe that the surveillance programme would be a waste of (our) money.

We are looking forward the Southland Branch field day which, to make attendance by northerners easier, will be held at Momona. If you are planning to fly in on February 14 - just book to Dunedin. The emphasis will be on practical ways to improve the bottom line by working smarter.

Register your interest with Don Stedman for details in late January.

**- Don Stedman**

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# Medal for New Zealand Varroa Guide – Silver at Apimondia 2003

The $7.6 million Varroa transitional management programme was the first such programme by central government under the Biosecurity Act 1993. It had the objectives of slowing the spread of Varroa to the South Island and minimising its impact in infested areas.

Part of the programme was Education. A 124 page book *Control of Varroa; a guide for New Zealand Beekeepers* was written and sent to all beekeepers in August 2001. Interestingly, there has been significant demand for the book from other countries where Varroa is a problem.

Inside the *Control of Varroa; a guide for New Zealand Beekeepers* dated 2001, acknowledgement is given to;

Mark Goodwin, who is a senior scientist with the Horticulture and Food Research Institute of New Zealand Ltd (Hort Research), and is stationed at the Ruakura Agricultural Centre in Hamilton. Mark and his team have conducted extensive work in the fields of honey bee pollination and American foulbrood control, and he is now playing a leading role in New Zealand's research efforts in Varroa control.

Cliff Van Eaton, who is an apiculture scientist with HortResearch. Cliff has been an Apicultural Advisory Officer with Mar Quality Management, and was national manager for the American foulbrood control programme from 1991 to 1998. He is co-author with Mark Goodwin of *Elimination of American foulbrood without the use of drugs*, published by the National Beekeepers Association of New Zealand in 1999.

The authors also acknowledge the assistance and support of HortResearch and Comvita NZ Ltd in the research and writing of this publication and the following individuals and institutions who kindly reviewed the initial draft:

- **Mike Brown and colleagues, CSL National Bee Unit, UK Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food**
- **Paul Brown, New Zealand**
- **John Gates, British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Canada**
- **Henrik Hansen and Camilla Brodsgaard, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Denmark**
- **Andrew Matheson, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, New Zealand**
- **Sarah and Simon Peacey, New Zealand**
- **Murray Reid, Agriquality NZ Ltd, New Zealand**
- **Peter Sales, New Zealand**
- **Hachiro Shimanuki, US Department of Agriculture (retired), USA**

**Picture Credits**

- **Ambrosiushoeve Research Centre for Insect Pollination and Beekeeping**
- **Bee Research Laboratory, US Department of Agriculture**
- **CSL, National Bee Unit, UK Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food**
- **Keith Pegram**
- **Mid-Atlantic Apiculture Research and Extension Consortium**
- **University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources**
- **HortResearch, NZ**

# About the Apiary

Beekeeping is now very intensive. A routine of checking, feeding, requeening and equalising hives to prevent swarming. Hives close to bush areas are bringing in enough nectar and pollen to sustain themselves from coprosmas, pittosporums and olearias. The olearia's produce a very sweet fragrance that can be detected quite some distance from this scrub and makes working bees close-by, very pleasant.

Hives on intensively farmed land do not have the variety of nectar and pollen sources available apart from early dandelions and now need constant feeding to keep the queens laying at a maximum.

The cold snap during early October held back some early nectar sources for about a week but all the fine weather that followed has helped to bring things back on line.

Hot weather has some drawbacks for beekeepers. We all know the song "mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the mid-day sun". Well beekeepers do likewise and with all our protective clothing, we tend to sweat a lot and there is a constant need to re-hydrate. Most beekeepers drink water between yards and eat on the run. You can tell when your are not taking in enough water. That thirsty sensation becomes a headache by the end of the day and can take a few hours to rectify. Hence it's important to drink a lot of plain water even if you don't think you need it. You may also notice a few muscle spasms at the end of the day if your not taking in enough salt. Some beekeepers add supplements to their water bottles to top up body reserves. A word of warning; soft drinks contain sugar or artificial sweeteners that bind the water and don't allow transpiration. (Warm cordials and soft drinks are worse than no water at all for dehydration - from an army medic). One tends to notice these things more as one gets older.

Hobby beekeepers can have problems working hives in urban areas. As colony strength increases, neighbours begin to notice the bees flying around them. When it's a nice day, you're prevented from attending to your bees because all your neighbours are out in their gardens. You either have to work your bees early in the morning or late into the evening. The only problem with evening work is that most of the flying bees are home and they get very defensive. Better to work the bees at 6 am in the morning, when they are not really flying, they are easy to work and will have settled down and commenced working by the time your neighbours get up.

Supering is always a problem for a new beekeeper. When to and how many should I put on. The hive population is expanding rapidly. Every 21 days they may need a new super just to provide room for the emerging bees. This is important, as you require at least three supers of bees in the hives to produce a decent honey crop. Super well a head of time by adding two supers at a time. Encourage the bees up into these by putting an outside honey frame from the super below into the centre of the new super.

Swarms are a nuisance in urban areas and no matter how much you try some hives just want to swarm. Generally swarms are attracted to an apiary or a stack of supers by the smell of the wax. You can take advantage of this by making up and placing bait hives around the area on shed roofs. (A full depth super containing three or four dark frames, the rest foundation frames with a 25mm entrance). Also leave one or two bait hives close to where you have received swarm calls before. As a general rule you will get a swarm call from an area every second year. Swarms are a great way of making up winter losses. You can either requeen them and set them up as a production unit for next year or collect three swarms and put them together using two sheets of newspaper between each. This produces a massive hive, which will quickly full with honey. There's a little trick to this. Put the yellow, quiet bees on top as the bees going down through the supers usually get rid of the extra queens.

Never try to combine two small swarms into one when one is light-coloured and the other is a dark bee, as they will fight each other. As a rule I catch a swarm, put it into a super, leave it for a few days to settle down, then find and kill the queen and combine it with other swarms using the newspaper method.

I made my first mistake this year with an early swarm. It was on a low bush (couldn't be cut) so took an hour or so to smoke it into the super. It was late in the evening when I finished, so I just put in a few miticide strips and dropped it into a yard to check later. The next day I went to check on the swarm and the super was empty. This could have been due to the strips or perhaps it contained a virgin queen (it was a big swarm). To stop swarms absconding, take a frame of brood from another hive (after shaking off all the bees) and place this into the swarm super. The bees will not normally leave brood.

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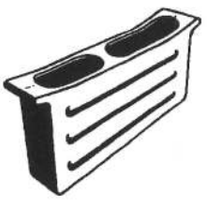

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As a public service, most clubs arrange a swarm list to get new beekeepers started. The only problem with this is when receive a call you don't know what sort of situation you are getting into. It pays to ask a few questions to start with.

How big is the swarm? It should be as big as a football otherwise it could be just the bees left behind after the original swarm has left, or it could be a small after swarm.

How high up is it? I don't go any higher than a standard stepladder now although I will try to throw a rope over a branch to dislodge a high swarm. I've had my time of climbing trees and falling off fences. If it's high, just leave a swarm box on a nearby shed roof. You might get lucky. There are also pheromone strips available that use artificial Nasanov gland secretion, which can be used as an attractant to get the swarm down.

Where is it? If it's on a building, often it has already started going into it. The only way to get them out again is to place a paper towel with a little benzaldehyde on it into the hole and hope that this will drive them out. Never squirt this into a hole in a building, as this is a little dangerous as it can spontaneous combust. Benzaldehyde is also easy to use to drive bees out of hedges, etc but use rubber gloves when you are using this stuff.

Bees in the ground are generally wasps or bumblebees but not always. Bumblebees are no problem and shouldn't be destroyed. Wasps are dispatched with a tablespoon of insecticide powder down the hole. The trick here is to tiptoe up to the hole and spoon in the poison. Thumping the ground only disturbs the wasps.

If bees are going into the house ask how long they have been there. Are they carrying pollen? Sometimes it's just scout bees. Block up the hole and leave a bait hive for a week. If it's already installed in a building, you can try to remove it if you can get access to it (but this can take a whole day and the bees will usually abscond if they are not blocked into a super for a day or two after removal). Or you can use a mesh cone or a bee escape, which allows the bees out but not in again. Place a nuc box with a frame of eggs and emerging bees in the nuc as close to the entrance as possible. The incoming bees with then go into the nuc and after six weeks can be removed and the escape removed and the hole sealed.

I generally advise residents to kill bees in a roof cavity by using a borerbomb or if they are in the side of a building, use a burst of fly-spray, a couple of times a day for four days. This doesn't always work, as the hive can sometime be well way from the entrance. Hence it sometime pays to get a professional in.

Ask them to describe the bees. One or two a minute going in and out means bumble bees. Colour can determine whether it's wasps or not.

Always wear a bee suit when collecting swarms. I have attended a few in shorts and got a hiding from the bees. Once a swarm has been on a branch for a day or so they can become defensive. It also looks good to wear your gear. Most of the time it's a very easy situation to pick up a swarm. Just cut off the branch and drop it into a carton. Don't forget to anticipate that swarms are heavy and if working above your head, don't forget to zip up. Bees down the neck are not always comfortable. Encourage the children to come and have a look once the bees start going into the box. This removes the sense of fear, some parents install in their children regarding stinging insects.

I use a cardboard box and a large bit of shad cloth when picking up swarms. Most will go into the box and can then be covered for transporting. There's always a few bees left behind if this is done during the day so advise the residence of this situation and tell them how to mercifully kill what's left. A squirt of dishwashing liquid into a half full garden sprayer (of water) will drown the bees very quickly. Best done late in the evening.

List of tools. Pruning saw, secateurs or pruning shears, cardboard box to transport the bees, windbreak cloth, rope, ladder, protective gear, smoker, fuel, benzaldehyde, paper towels and carry antihistamine or an Epipen for public safety if you do this regularly. You gradually accumulate more gear to cover all situations.

Things to do this month: check feed, check pollen, AFB check, raise queen cells, supering hives, requeening hives, swarm control, cull out old frames, fit foundation into comb honey frames. Remove strips before the honey flow. Start experimenting with the organic treatments to combat mite resistance to strips and take time out to smell the daisies.

**- Frank Lindsay.**

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# Restructured Apiculture courses for 2004

Apiculture courses delivered by Telford Rural Polytechnic will have a new flavour next year. The full-time **Certificate in Apiculture** course at Telford will be predominantly unit standard based. The **Certificate in Apiculture Knowledge,** correspondence course, will include knowledge unit standards and Telford modules. The **Certificate in Queen Bee Rearing** will also consist of unit standards and Telford modules.

Over the last twelve months the Agriculture Industry Training Organisation (AgITO) has been working with Telford, representatives of the industry and AgriQuality to develop unit standards for two national certificates in apiculture, the National Certificate in Apiculture (level 2) Beekeeper's Assistant and the National Certificate in Apiculture (level 3) Leading Hand. The unit standards for level two (equivalent to 6th form, year 12) are available and the level three (equivalent to 7th form, year 13) are in the process of being approved.

The new Telford Certificate in Apiculture course will cover the following topics: information about the **NZ beekeeping industry** - including legislation, history, code of practice, health and safety; **Entomology** - the study of insects; **Beekeeping Equipment** - for frame and hive assembly and repair; **Botany** – which covers knowledge of plants and a plant collection; **Bee Behaviour** - in the hive and when foraging; **Hive Manipulations** - including requeening, feeding hives, evaluating queens, wintering hives; **Pollination**, hive preparation and shifting hives; **Queen Bee Rearing** knowledge, the details of queen bee rearing and breeding is covered in a separate 'Certificate in Queen Bee Rearing' which can be undertaken concurrently; **Agricultural Chemicals** - including symptoms of poisoning and a Grow Safe Certificate, **Pests and Diseases** – including identification and management of diseases and knowledge of Varroa and AFB, this also includes doing a DECA exam; **Honey Processing** – including removal of honey and processing and honey house maintenance as well as properties of honey; **Marketing** including national and international trends and quality management; **Alternative Hive Products** – production and processing of a range of hive products; **Business Administration** – including record keeping, budgets and taxation; Food Safety methods and food safety programmes; **Machinery Maintenance** –servicing petrol and diesel engines; **Computing**; and a **First Aid** Certificate.

Thus a motivated student who comes to Telford for a year (38 weeks) from February to November can complete the following:

Telford Certificate in Apiculture

Telford Certificate in Queen Bee Rearing

National Certificate in Apiculture (level 2)

National Certificate in Apiculture (level 3)

Disease Elimination Conformity Agreement exam

Growsafe Certificate

First Aid Certificate

Work experience with commercial beekeepers.

The Telford programme gives students the theory and practical experience to enable students to carry out practical industry work with minimal supervision and a taste of the commercial industry. It does not, however, provide students with the experience commercial beekeepers have developed by years of local knowledge of their districts, microclimates and the individual systems employed in their business. Commercial beekeepers need to teach these aspects to graduate students.

The course is general and attempts to cover a range of topics with some intensive aspects, particularly in the queen bee rearing course where grafting and artificial insemination are covered.

In the future we will be attempting to deliver the full-time Certificate in Apiculture course both on and off campus by using a combination of short block courses, correspondence modules and practical assessors. We may also look at the possibility of developing an apprenticeship scheme. Practical assessors are currently used for the correspondence course so if you are interested in being a Telford Practical Assessor and are not currently on the list please advise us on 0800 TELFORD 0800 835 367. Practical assessors are sent a booklet of practical skills that need to be assessed. Assessment would normally be undertaken over one day each year.

We now need support from industry so if you need to employ someone in your business think long term and have a recruitment policy. This plan could include identifying a local candidate. This may be a young school leaver in your area or

there maybe someone who is currently working for you or who would like to work in your business but does not have the skills or experience. You could then encourage them to work for you for a few weeks or months to ensure they are keen to become a beekeeper then sponsor them to come to Telford for a year by paying their tuition fees ($2,756 for 2003). In return this student could then return to work full-time for you following graduation from Telford. Telford need students to enroll in the course for 2004 if we do not get 8-10 students on any course then it may not proceed. So if you know of someone contact us now and we can send them an enrolment pack.

**- David Woodward**

# Comvita Announces Shareholding In Medical Honey Company

Comvita New Zealand has purchased a 50 per cent shareholding in Cambridge based Api-Med Medical Honey Limited, a company whose medical grade honey products are being trialed in hospitals and clinics in the UK

Api-Med is a joint venture between WaikatoLink, the commercial arm of the University of Waikato, and the manuka honey marketing company Bee and Herbal New Zealand Ltd. Under the terms of the agreement, Bee and Herbal's health food business will merge with Comvita which will acquire all of the former's assets including its internationally recognised health food brand, 'Medi-Bee'.

The technological advance of honey as a practical and effective medical device is a key business strategy of Api-Med. This device is a manuka honey-based wound dressing incorporating advanced alginate technology in which the healing product is manufactured into a firm, user-friendly gel. New Zealand manuka honey with the UMF (unique manuka factor) rating is gaining worldwide recognition for its effectiveness in treating wounds.

Api-Med, in conjunction with its UK manufacturing partner Brightwake, recently achieved the CE mark, widely recognised as the medical device milestone and the UK registration which allows manuka honey dressings to be marketed directly to hospitals and clinics.

To support this, Api-Med has developed its Medical Honey Accredited Supplier Programme to ensure that only the highest quality honey is put forward to support what it describes as a unique, global market opportunity for manuka honey as a bone-fide medicine. Api-Med's plans include worldwide distribution into key medical markets.

Bee and Herbal's owner-operators Phil and Sharan Caskey say UMF manuka honey is becoming one of the most exciting natural products on the market for wound treatment.

They claim that not only has Api-Med been instrumental in developing the commercial pathway for honey as a medical device technology, but Bee and Herbal has successfully developed an auditable quality supplier system that involves landowners and beekeepers in the supply of high quality medical grade honey to the marketplace.

Comvita CEO Graeme Boyd says the opportunity to purchase a shareholding in such an innovative and aligned business as Api-Med is one his board and management team recognised as significant for the further development of unique products of New Zealand origin.

"The potential for these products in the medical honey field is huge," says Boyd. "They demonstrate the ability of natural products companies with strong research and development programmes to compete in the medical field.

"Comvita will add organisational and management strength to the company as well as providing access to growth capital through its planned listing on the New Zealand Stock Exchange's new AX market in November.

"Bee and Herbal's business is strategic to Comvita. Their 'Medi-Bee' brand of manuka honey already has a very strong position in the UK health market and in Australia."

Gary Betteridge, CEO of WaikatoLink, says the Api-Med development is a significant commercialisation of the university's intellectual property in the use of honey in wound care.

"Our partnership with Bee and Herbal has seen the project develop from a concept to the stage where it is now very close to full commercialisation on a global scale," says Betteridge. "We now feel it is appropriate to let private companies get on with the production, marketing and sales of the technology."

Betteridge says one of the most pleasing aspects is that Comvita's involvement ensures the ownership of the technology remains firmly in New Zealand hands.

**- Lance Morcan** 07 571 4203

# Certificates Of Inspection

The PMS requires that, every beekeeper who does not have a Certificate of Inspection Exemption must ensure that every honey bee colony, in every beehive owned by that beekeeper, is inspected for American Foulbrood cases by an Authorised Person on or after 1 August and on or before 30 November each year".

Your Certificate of Inspection Exemption is issued once you have a current Disease Elimination Conformity Agreement (DECA).

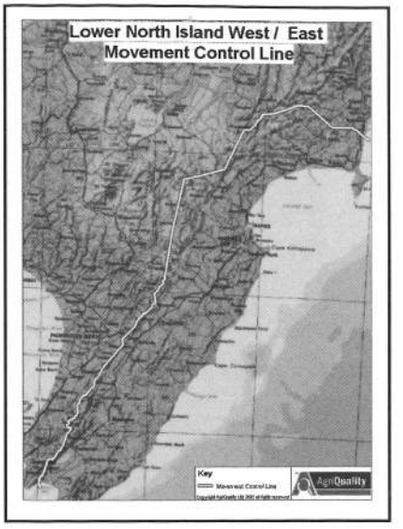
If you do not have a DECA and wish to have one, contact the Management Agency.

Certificates of Inspection are mailed out in July of each year, and need to be completed and returned not later than the 15th December.

**- Jane Lorimer**
**President National Beekeepers Association**

# *Movement control line change*

On Wednesday 24th September 2003, the movement control line spanning the central North Island was revoked. After three years of restrictions, hives can once again be moved between the Upper North Island and East Cape, Taranaki, Manawatu, Horowhenua and Wellington.




For southern beekeepers this means the re-opening of kiwifruit pollination in the Bay of Plenty, and for northern beekeepers, the chance to re-populate honey sites closed off to them when the line was implemented.

In its place will be a "conditional movement control line" around Hawkes Bay and the Wairarapa, to slow the spread of Varroa in those regions. The line begins north of the Mahia Peninsula, runs north around Lake Waikaremoana, then follows the Ruahine and Tararau Ranges south to Cook Strait. A map of this line is being mailed to all North Island beekeepers. Beekeepers will require a permit to move hives, queens, bulk bees and honey supers over the new line into Hawke's Bay and the Wairarapa. Only hives under miticide treatment will be issued a permit to cross this new line. Information on permitting conditions and permit application forms can be obtained from AgriQuality Ltd on 0508 00 11 22.

The new movement control line was made after extensive discussion with the beekeeping industry.

**- Paul Bolger**

# Ross Arthur Blackman (Blackie)

Ross Arthur Blackman (ARB or Blackie) passed away in his sleep on the 3rd September 2003 aged 80 years. He was an old and dear friend to many of us fellow beekeepers. This short eulogy does not tell you about Ross's past occupations and life but it comes from the heart at a personal level.

Ross was a very passionate man, passionate towards his family and especially his grandchildren, passionate towards his bees, passionate towards his friends.

Ross was a wise old gentleman who could discuss absolutely anything from what's the problem in a beehive, to his philosophy that there would be less marriage break-ups if couples at the end of the working day sat down together and had a gin before dinner.

There are many stories about Ross I could tell you ... This little story happened while we were staying the night with him. Ross had that day driven to Rotorua to collect from his friend Steve Weenink half a dozen breeder queens (valuable commodity). Steve had driven from Tauranga to facilitate the delivery so there had been some effort to obtain these queens. Ross had them sitting on a piece of newspaper on top of the oven elements. Ross was cooking one of his delicious dinners while we were all having that wee drink I mentioned earlier. It took only a few minutes for things to happen, the newspaper caught on fire and erupted into flames three foot high. Bits of alight newspaper and frizzling escorts were whirling around the room. The smell of burnt candy and melting plastic filled the air. What could we do- we made a pact not to let on to Steve Weenink and finished our drinks laughing.

Ross came to stay with us in Hawkes Bay in the summer of 2002. We thought Ross would languish in the sun, rest and read. How wrong we were, he came complete with bee suit!. Each day he went beekeeping, stumbling around the yards tripping over roofs and standing in the flight paths. He was too unagile to sit in the middle of a Ute and too unstable on his feet to deal with gates. He really enjoyed the days out and that a couple days inconvenience was worth it to us to see his smile.

Ross told me a wee story about himself; at the time we were discussing why I thought all beekeepers doing a Deca should have a mandatory eye test. Ross said he went to graft one day but he could not see if there was suitable larvae in his chosen frame so he asked his worker "Are there larvae in here?"


Celebrating the Life of

Arthur Ross Blackman

~ Ross ~

30th January 1923 - 3rd September 2003

The guy replied "Why"

Ross said" Just tell me are there larvae in there"

The guy said "Why"

Getting angry Ross said "Just tell me are there larvae or NOT?"

The worker said "Why do you want to know its got AFB!!!"

James always thought Ross should have had a marriage guidance consultancy. Ross advised one of James' employee's wives to sometimes throw away her gumboots and jeans and to put on a dress and makeup. Then she might find some things a little different. On the flip side Ross told the young husband – you may always love a woman but you will never ever be able to understand them.

Ross, Blackie, ARB was loved and will be missed by so many people and I for one thank him for his wisdom and friendship.

**Mary-Anne Thomason**

## Change For Conference Dates 2004

**Conference 2004 will be in Hawkes Bay. To get the best of venues we have had to settle for an early date of 28 June to 1 July. Make your plans now so that you will enjoy.**

**Ron Morison**
**Conference Secretary**

# MAF Discussion Paper on a GM Database due in December

Since the report of the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) has been working with the beekeeping sector to investigate ways to mitigate any potential impacts on bee products arising from any release of flowering GM crops. A report exploring the issues is available on the MAF website (http://www.maf.govt.nz/mafnet/rural-nz/research-and-development/biotechnology/literature-review-gm-plants-and-bee-products/index.htm). MAF is also monitoring the impacts of GM crops on organic honey producers in other countries.

During consultation with the sector in 2002, beekeepers suggested that the location of GM crops should be documented on a database so that beekeepers could respond accordingly. The Government has instructed MAF to investigate the use of a Geographic Information System (GIS) based register for GM plants, to enable beekeepers to site their hives away from unwanted nectar or pollen food sources. GIS-based systems are simply computer-based mapping systems. For example, the Apiary Register is GIS based.

MAF is preparing a discussion paper on the topic. This will be available on the MAF website from early December, and circulated to beekeepers by e-mail where possible, using the industry's e-mail lists. Beekeepers will have two months to provide feedback. For further information contact Irene Parminter, MAF Policy, Private Bag 3123 Hamilton, email address **parminteri@maf.govt.nz**

## CORRECTION

**October issue (page 14) Editors comments following beeFORCE letter should have read - 'The Coast and Country" - October 2003 edition has more details on the beeFORCE units 10 day hireage for $100.00 + GST. Included in the article are close-up photos.**

# Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand

**- AL Poole & Nancy M Adams**


**Coriaria arborea & Coriaria sarmentosa**

**Common names: Tutu, Toot**

**Maori Names: Tutu, Tupakihi, Puhou**

There are actually 7 species of Coriaria in New Zealand which regularly hybridise, though the two species mentioned above are the more numerous. They range in size from small alpine species to the size of a small tree.

The leaves are shiny and are opposite each other on the stem. The venation of the leaves is very distinctive, and the stems are vaguely 4 sided. This plant has long drooping racemes of flowers that are 15 to 30 cms long, small and reddish to purple coloured. Flowering can be from September through to March. Bees collect large amounts of greenish yellow pollen in some seasons. The most notable feature of this plant is the purple berries.

The seeds and stems of this tree are extremely poisonous. The poison is called Tutin – which affects the medulla oblongata and causes vomiting, convulsions, frothing at the mouth, paralysis and death.

**Affects on animals**

In the early years of colonisation of New Zealand, the settlers lost large numbers of stock from toot poisoning, although horses are not known to suffer from this. However it has been recorded that an Elephant travelling with a circus died from tutin poisoning.

Once again, in the early 1960's, an elephant travelling with a circus from Rotorua to Hamilton grabbed some toot leaves when they stopped on the Mamaku ranges. The vet that attended the sick animal noticed that there were toot leaves in the bottom of the cage, and treated the Elephant who did survive – I guess the Vet didn't want to have to dig a hole to bury such a large animal!!!! In a person it needs only a dose of approximately 1 milligram of tutin to produce nausea and vomiting and for a healthy grown man to be incapable of work for 24 hours.

**Affects on Honey**

It is not the nectar from the flowers of this tree that is poisonous but the sap from the stem. The passion vine hopper loves feeding on the sap from this tree and produces strands of Honey Dew (like that produced from Beech trees), and it is this honey dew that the bees collect. Hence the poison can get into honey. Consumption of comb honey is the worst offender for poisonings, as the tutin can be concentrated into a few cells in lethal doses. No antidote is known, though inhalation of chloroform, followed by sedatives and bleeding sometimes helps (not recommended for humans). The Tutin does not affect the bees or the passion vine hoppers.

The maori and some early settlers used to make a beverage (wine) from the berries – though this did need all the very small seeds removed. It is not recommended these days as the wine shop is a safer bet. Also the maori used the boiled leaves as an external poultice for bleeding cuts and boils.

**- T Lorimer**

# AFB PMS

***Calendar of events***

October 2003 – the Order in council for the Biosecurity (American Foulbrood – Apiary and Beekeeper Levy) Order 2003 is in its final draft.

Preparation is underway to organise invoicing once the order is in place – it comes into force 28 days after the date of its notification in the Gazette.

The levy year will be from the 1st of June to the 31st of May – this means that the first levy invoice will be for the remaining part of the year (Dec – May), however it may be greater than a pro rata cost because of fixed charges (ie postage & invoice costs are not cheaper because they cover a part year).

The levy will be calculated on the apiaries registered on the 31st of March each year. All beekeepers will be required to fund the levy, although those beekeepers who have registered fewer than 11 beehives on fewer than 4 apiaries will only be required to pay the base fee plus one apiary – ie $28 + GST (for this year).

The levy will consist of a base levy, plus an apiary levy.

This year's rate will be $20 base levy, and a fee of $8 per apiary excluding GST.

The base levy will be the same each year, but the apiary levy may change but will be a maximum of $15-17 + GST

**When will I need to pay the levy?**

1. In this first year, it will have to be paid within 28 days of the invoice being sent – after that penalties will be applied.
2. In the following years, the invoice will be sent out with the Annual Disease Returns that are sent out on or about the 20th of April – this will be due for payment by the 1st of June.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Penalties will apply to outstanding debts – these will be initially at 10% with 2% for each month (compounding)

The Management Agency will consult with all beekeepers on how it plans to spend the levy money, and all beekeepers will be given the chance to make submissions on how they think the money collected for the strategy should be spent. All funds collected will be retained and used by the Management Agency only and not the NBA.

When will consultation take place?

It is intended that a budget for the following year will be drawn up and sent out with the levy invoices – time will be given for submissions to be received.

Notification of the new levy rate for the next year will be notified before the 20th of January of each year.

# Diagnosing American Foulbrood Disease

**Dr Mark Goodwin**
**Apicultural Research Unit**
**HortResearch**

Diagnosing American foulbrood disease (AFB) in honey bee colonies correctly, can be difficult. The first step, once the bees have been shaken off a frame, is to check the cell cappings for those that are darker than the surrounding cells, sunken or have irregular shaped holes chewed in them. Some experience is required to be able to tell the difference between the holes left in cappings as they are being sealed (Figure 1), holes caused by emerging bees, and those chewed by bees trying to remove a diseased larva (Figure 2). Any suspect cell should be uncapped.

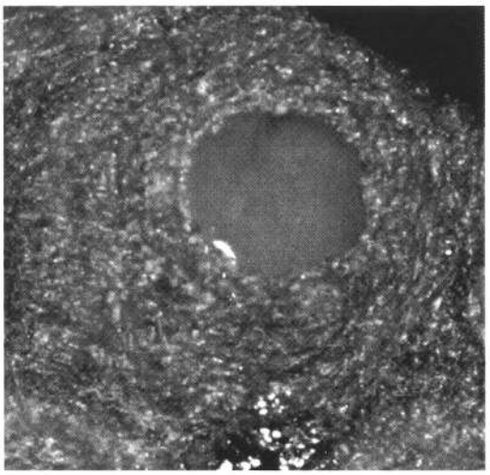


Figure 1. A cell in the process of being sealed.

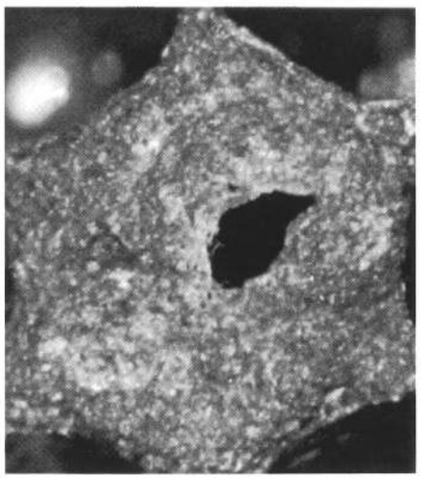


Figure 2. Hole chewed in the capping of a cell where the bees are trying to remove a diseased larva.

Cells with irregular holes chewed in the cappings will, hopefully, not conceal an AFB diseased larva or pupa. Bees chew the cappings on cells containing larvae with chalk brood disease (caused by a fungus), sacbrood disease (caused by a virus infection) and parasitic mite syndrome (caused by varroa). It is important, therefore to be able to recognize these diseases as well so they can be differentiated from AFB. Every registered beekeeper in New Zealand should have received a pamphlet with colour photos describing the symptoms of all four diseases.

Unfortunately, just because one or most of the cells in a hive with chewed cappings contain larvae without AFB this does not mean that there is not one or more containing AFB infected larvae. Most beekeepers faced with a large number of cells with chewed cappings only uncap a few and if the cells do not contain AFB assume that the rest do not contain AFB larvae. The only way to be confident that there is not an AFB diseased larva lurking behind a chewed capping is to remove all chewed cappings. In some cases this may mean uncapping a large number of cells.

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**Just because one or most of the cells in a hive with chewed cappings contain larvae without AFB this does not mean that there is not one or more containing AFB infected larvae**

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Parasitic mite syndrome (PMS), that occurs with high varroa numbers, makes this even more difficult. PMS may result in more than 50% of cell cappings being chewed or sunken. It would usually be too difficult in these cases to check every cell with a chewed capping. However, beekeepers have found out the cost of not doing so the hard way. Their hives were inspected as the honey was removed and correctly diagnosed as having PMS by the beekeeper checking a few cells. The honey was removed, the hives treated for varroa, the honey extracted and the wet supers stored with the other supers. When the control strips were removed 6 weeks later the PMS had disappeared. It then became obvious that some of the chewed cappings had concealed larvae with AFB and that there was going to be more diseased colonies when the wet supers were used next.

The obvious answer to the PMS problem is to not let varroa numbers get high enough to cause PMS. If PMS is present, treat the colonies without removing the honey and only remove it after the PMS has cleared up and the hives have been checked properly. Alternatively, the honey could be removed and the PMS hives treated. Each PMS hive should be numbered along with the honey supers removed. These should not be extracted until after the PMS has disappeared and the colonies have been rechecked. Alternatively the honey could be extracted and the frames returned to their original supers. These could then be located and destroyed if the hive they came from was found to have AFB.

AFB diseased larvae or pupae may take on a range of appearances as the disease symptoms develop. A larva is initially pearly white curled around the bottom of the cell. As the disease takes hold the larva stretches itself along the lower wall of the cell (PMS larvae normally spiral up the cell). The normally plump larva then slumps in on itself as the bacteria consumes its tissues (both chalkbrood and sacbrood diseased

larvae remain plump). The AFB infected larva then changes from white to a characteristic coffee (with milk) colour. From there the larva darkens as it dries out becoming a black scale that cannot be easily removed from the cell. If a larva is infected later in its development, or with fewer bacteria, it is able to develop further before dying. Early stage pupae that die can have a structure referred to as a pupal tongue stretched across the opening of the cell (Figure 3). Pupae can also die of AFB much later in their development. Fully formed pupae at the white or pink eyed stage can be found that are coffee coloured rather than the typical white colour. Other than the colour they look completely normal.

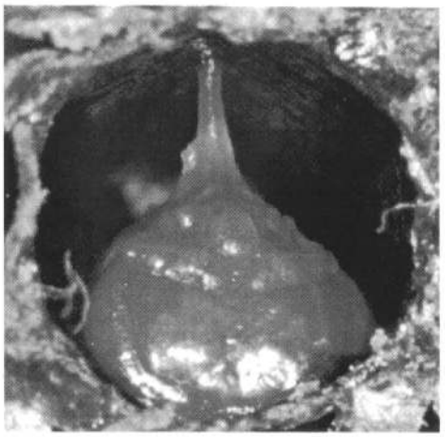


Figure 3. AFB pupa with a pupal tongue.

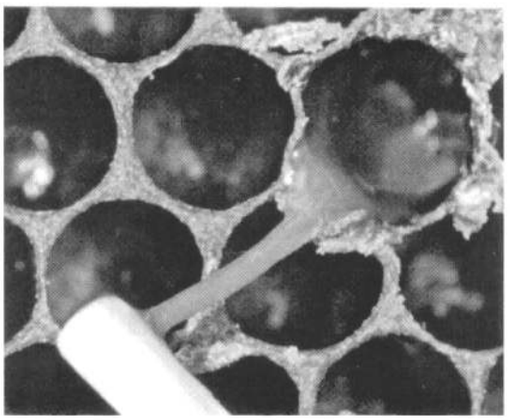


Figure 4. Ropiness test.

Coffee coloured larvae and pupae, and the presence of the tongue are good diagnostic tools. However, the best tool is the ropiness test. A matchstick is used to mix up the larval tissues in the cell. When the stick is withdrawn the larval material will rope out sticking to both the cell wall and matchstick. This does not occur once the larval or pupal remains start to dry out.

Even the most skilled observer will find diseased larvae where the diagnosis is unclear. The colour may not be right or the tissues do not rope out just the right way to be AFB. If this is the case then the first step should be to search through the rest of the brood to see if a larva with more clear AFB symptoms can be found. If there is still doubt take a sample and get it tested in a laboratory. Wrap the match used for the ropiness test in plastic and place in a freezer. Then contact AgriQuality (Ph 0508001122) and they will explain how to submit a sample. This testing service is free.

The second approach is to clearly mark the lid of the hive to indicate that it is a suspect AFB hive. Nothing should be removed from the hive until it has passed a second inspection at a later date.

Not all AFB diseased larvae will be behind darkened, sunken or chewed cell cappings. Some will have cappings with a normal appearance. When these occur in a normal brood pattern they are almost impossible to identify. However, as the brood hatches, the disease cells are usually left behind. It is therefore good practice to uncap any cells that from their position the bee should have emerged, but has not.

There may also be diseased larvae in cells, which are not capped at all. Either because the diseased cell has been completely uncapped by the nurse bees or because the larva died before the cell was sealed. Unfortunately these are usually much less obvious than larvae behind chewed cappings.

AFB scale (the dried remains of an AFB infected larva on the lower wall of a cell) are probably the hardest of all to see. If present in a live hive, there should be fresh disease material that can be more easily identified. The AFB scale cannot usually be removed without breaking up the cell. If in doubt get a sample tested. To check for scale the frame should be held upside down with the top of the fame towards the observer. The light needs to shine over the shoulder and into the cells. The shape of the scale resembles the rounded end of a bullet.

# Accurate measurement of antibacterial activity in honey

There are instances of repeated testing of the same batch of honey are being requested from the testing laboratory for measurement of its antibacterial activity. It is important that packers understand the statistical aspects of the variation that is seen in the results reported from repeated tests, as there is a legal requirement under consumer protection legislation for the contents of jars or tubes of honey to be true to the description on the label.

Anyone selling honey with activity that is not up to the claimed level is likely to have the importance of this brought to their attention, as not only is the Active Manuka Honey Association testing jars of honey to check if their activity is as stated, but importers in Japan are also planning doing the same.

Packers cannot have confidence that their labelling is correct unless the testing of the honey is done on a sample taken from a homogeneous batch that has been processed for packing – as explained in an earlier article in the Beekeeper (March 2003, pp. 16-17), samples taken from drums of honey may not be representative of the whole drum of honey. Even then, confidence can only be within the margin of error that is inherent in an assay based on living cells. Because of natural variation in bacterial growth, the results reported for antibacterial activity will vary a bit each time a sample is tested.

By labelling the activity, as many do, as 10+, 15+, etc., this gets around the problem of inexactness in measurement as long as the activity is definitely above the stated minimum level. To ensure that it is definitely above the stated minimum level a margin of error needs to be allowed, or repeated testing needs to be carried out to gain more confidence in the measurement. If, as an extreme example, the result reported was 10.1, and was on a day when the high end of the variation was being experienced, the true activity could be as low as 9.1, and a subsequent check of a pack pulled off the shelf for testing would find that the honey did not have activity above 10 as claimed if it had been labelled as 10+. If repeated testing of the same sample were carried out then the average value for the measurement would most likely represent the true value of the activity.

What should never be done is to get repeated testing done in order to get a high variant in the result that can then be used to certify the batch as being active enough to get into a particular category. For example, if a batch on repeated tests gave reported activity levels of 9.5, 9.1, 9.7, 9.3 and 10.1 it could not be sold as 10+ on the basis of the last value reported, as its true activity would be near 9.5, the average of these values.

Where honey is being traded between producers and buyers, the inexactness of the assay method could translate into as much as $300 being underpaid or overpaid for a drum of honey. However, the random nature of the variation in measurement means that the overpayments and underpayments will average out, as long as buyers or sellers are not getting repeated testing done then using only the results that are most in their favour.

Hopefully, with the plans of the Active Manuka Honey Association to fund research to improve the accuracy of the testing method for UMF®, there will be a smaller margin of error in the future. But in the meanwhile a sensible consideration of the factors involved will prevent the risk of litigation.

**- Dr. P.C. Molan**
Professor of Biological Sciences Director, Honey Research Unit
Department of Biological Sciences, University of Waikato

# Marlborough Beekeepers Association Meeting

On Saturday 27th September the Marlborough Beekeepers Association in conjunction with Federated Farmers Bee Industry Group held a meeting to discuss the proposal for the Varroa PMS and to hear from Brian Alexander re; his experience with the aforementioned pest.

Dr Bruce Simpson outlined the VPMS proposal and there followed a good and vigorous debate on the issue. To summarise, the majority of the thirty beekeepers assembled agreed to a PMS, which supported the maintenance of the movement control line across cook strait and a targeted surveillance programme. There was however plenty of skepticism regarding eradication; its feasability, lack of trust of government departments and politicians (all parties) and the creation of another bureaucracy.

The afternoon was filled by Brian Alexander, an Auckland Beekeeper and known to many of you, who gave an interesting and candid rundown on varroa and how it had affected his operation from day one to present. His experiences and answers to our questions made the whole day very worthwhile and we thank him for giving up his time at a busy time of the year for all of us.

Merle Moffat gave us a quick but entertaining account of her visit to Apimondia this year and is already in training to drink Dublin dry of Guinness at the next conference.

- Photo: John Bush

Varroa Strategy meeting, Blenheim. Inside Darryn Clifford's honey shed.

The day ended with light refreshments provided by the NZ Honey Co op and a very sporty overnight bag kindly donated by Ecroyds Beekeeping was auctioned to defray the costs of the day. Thank you for you sponsorship it is appreciated.

Finally thanks to Darren Clifford for his organisation and for providing the venue and especially to Sarah for the travel arrangements and cooking the BBQ lunch.

**- Will Trollope**

# Profile of a Recycled Executive member

Born in Eketahuna in 1931, I started life as a commercial beekeeper at 10 years old when my father Percy Berry gave my younger brother Alan and I, a hive each. Realising the need for hive numbers if I was to run a profitable beekeeping business I doubled my hive holdings the following year by buying out Alan's hive. I also learnt to save costs and develop my woodworking skills by making my first super from a wooden "Creamota" box bought off our local grocer for one shilling and six pence. Very proud I was too as I peddled the old bike along the shingle roads with my new super on the bar, out to my first apiary in Ormond Road, Hastings.

At the age of sixteen with money saved from after school, weekend and holiday jobs and some help from Dad, I bought out a local beekeeper and became the owner of 327 hives in the Sherenden area. A few years later Dad and I joined our assets together and formed a company named Arataki Apiaries Ltd. This was a requirement of the bank so we could borrow more money. We later changed the name to Arataki Honey Ltd, the name by which our family beekeeping business has been developed to the present stage where we are one of the worlds largest beekeeping enterprises.

On the 26th July 1989, I was made a life member of the National Beekeepers Association. This was one of the highlights of my life and ranks alongside other important days of my life such as the day I left school having at last reached the age of 15, and the day Pat and I got married.

As a new life member I felt I had done my bit for the NBA and it was time to move aside and make room for new blood. I had after all served for many years on the Hawkes Bay Branch Executive including some time as Branch Secretary and President and I had also served 8 years on the National Executive including three years as President. Apart from accepting the position of the North Island representative on the Board of Trustees looking after the Trust funds of the NBA when Russell resigned in 1993, a position I still hold, I have not had much to do with the affairs of the NBA since the late 1980's. However I have kept in touch through our local Branch, the annual conference, the New Zealand Beekeeping magazine and the many contacts we have with members of our industry.

During the past few years I have become concerned about the lack of nominations for positions on our National Executive, and was shocked to find at conference in July 2003 how close our NBA had come to going out of existence. I was however delighted to see the great job the Nelson Branch and our present executive did in running a very successful and well attended conference and seminar. Because of my long association with the NBA and my strong desire to see a successful change back to a voluntary organisation, I decided to offer to fill the vacancy for a North Island member of executive for the coming year until the next executive elections are held. My offer was accepted which is why I was asked to write a profile on a recycled executive member.

**- Ian Berry**

# INDENT ORDER SPECIALS ON HONEY EXTRACTORS & QUEEN EXCLUDERS

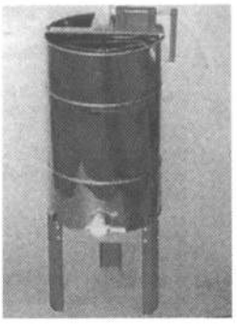
**NOTE: Orders must be received by 28th November 2003, accompanied by a 10% deposit. Orders available for collection or despatch January 2004.**

## ITALIAN STAINLESS STEEL HONEY EXTRACTORS

**3 Frame $389 + GST (Usually $484.44 +)**

**4 Frame $499 + GST (Usually $617.78 +)**

**4 Frame, electric, variable speed, reversible $1768 + GST (Usually $2128.89 +)**



## ITALIAN THREADED WIRE QUEEN EXCLUDERS

**376 x 477mm, for use with wooden frames, $980 + GST/100**

**402 x 505mm, for use as is or with galv. frame $1180 + GST/100**

**MINIMUM ORDER 100 GRIDS**

**12/24 Fr. Extractor,**

**tangential/semi-radial**

**Brand New**

**Immediate Delivery**

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**Enquire Now**

**Fantastic Manuka extractor**

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**SPECIAL:**

**$89 + GST per 1000 (usually $124 +GST per 1000)**

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**EXTRA SPECIAL:**

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**($459 incl. GST & freight)**

**Avery Scales,**

**Type 3901 AAG,**

**weigh up to 350 kg.**

**Ideal for drums of honey or blocks of wax**

**$500 + GST**

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BK 165

# MAF application to import M. pluton.

The NBA Executive recently received for comment an application from MAF to import a sample of the bacteria that causes EFB.

The National Centre for Disease Investigation in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is seeking to import a sample culture of a bacterium, Melissococcus pluton (M. pluton), into containment.

M. Pluton is the cause of European Foulbrood, a disease specific to honey bees of the genus Apis.

It therefore affects introduced, but not native, bees. M. Pluton is found throughout the rest of the world but is not present in New Zealand hives.

The bacteria will be used to ensure that laboratory testing for this disease is of a high quality, to allow more rapid testing and to develop new, more accurate tests. This testing is required to reduce the risk of the disease being introduced through imported bee products, and to improve surveillance of hives and rapid diagnosis of the disease should it be suspected or found in New Zealand.

The bacteria will at all times remain in a level 3 containment facility which meets the requirements of international standards and has additional features characteristic of level 4. All material removed from the laboratories will be decontaminated prior to leaving the facility. There is negligible risk of the organism being released or escaping from containment. MAF maintains contingency plans for any major incidents or equipment failures and capability for the containment and elimination of the disease should it be discovered outside of containment or a release suspected.

It is hoped that having M. pluton bacteria in a New Zealand laboratory will mean that suspect EFB samples will no longer have to be sent to Australia for testing, a process that has proved problematic in the past.
While seeking assurances about the security of the samples, given the uncertain future of the Wallaceville facility, the Executive supported the application.

**- Don Stedman**